Scenario 1 - I want my say
Global Issues and responsible behaviour in tutorials

Text version of animated scenario...

Students are sitting in class discussing world politics watching a recent news story on the presentation screen. The reporter revealed the news in a matter-of-fact manner:

“Warplanes battered civilians today, killing at least 26 people, and more rockets hit the city centre, with no sign that diplomacy would halt the ongoing conflict any time soon. A rebel group reported that one of its fighters had been killed, but gave no details. Both sides are blaming the other over the latest deaths and are expected to hit back with more violence. World leaders have warned foreigners to stay away from the area.”

As the story ended, Sarah turned to her classmates and questioned, “Why is anyone surprised about this? Those people are always fighting over nothing. We should just bomb them all! They just cause trouble wherever they go.”

A few students, also affected by the tragedy of the news story agreed, “Yeah!”

One student who was offended by this comment replied, “Who do you mean by those people? Don’t you think that all sorts of different people cause conflict? Do you really think the conflict is one-sided?”

Tension was increasing within the room. Another student, also upset and frustrated sat forward and joined in, “Do you mean that people like me cause trouble...just because of my beliefs? You’re all racist!”

The conversation became very personal. Sarah didn’t like being called racist and could see no problem with her initial comments, “Don’t call me a racist, I’m just telling the truth!” It’s not my fault if you people can’t control yourselves.”

Feeling annoyed she folded her arms and sat with her back turned to the group.
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*Reflection and feedback*

1. **Academic debate is about communicating responsibly**

Once you realise that tutorials are not about winning the argument but that they really are about sharing, listening and learning your whole approach to communicating with fellow students changes. It’s only when you relax and respect the opinions of others that real learning can happen. Anger, raised voices, cutting remarks and all sorts of bad attitude can easily creep in if you are focused on point scoring. It is not acceptable to turn a debate into a personal attack.

2. **What should be expected by lecturers / tutors?**

Your lecturers and tutors have a responsibility to encourage debate and to facilitate a discussion where everyone feels comfortable to be heard, and discriminatory comments are not directed at other students.

3. **What constitutes racial discrimination?**

Racial discrimination occurs when you treat someone less favourably because of his or her race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin than someone of a different race would be treated in a similar situation.

The [Racial Discrimination Act](#) makes racial discrimination unlawful whenever it impairs a person’s equal enjoyment of his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms.

For example:

1. being refused rental accommodation because of your race is unlawful.
2. being excluded from a party because of your race is hurtful but not unlawful

If you feel you are being discriminated against in class, contact your subject coordinator.